CHAPTER **XXXIX**

THE GERMAN AND WILSON PEACE NOTES OF DECEMBER, 1916

IN the account I gave in my last volume of the episode of the Lansdowne Memorandum, I recorded the fact that the Asquith Government had come to the unanimous conclusion that it would be a disastrous mistake to enter into peace negotiations with Germany before inflicting a complete defeat upon her armies.

Although Lord Curzon, in a speech delivered in the House of Lords, referred to "the glorious and noble victory of the Somme," the phrase was recognised at the time, especially by those who knew the facts—soldiers and civilians—as a merely characteristic piece of fustian. The Allies had completely failed in the main purpose of their attack, and the Germans had actually withdrawn troops from the battlefield at the crisis and climax of the offensive against them, in order to stage a more triumphant offensive of their own in a region which was removed hundreds of miles from the Somme terrain. At best the battle ended in a stalemate, which meant a check for the Allies as far as their main objective was concerned.

Nothing had therefore happened to alter the situation since the Asquith Cabinet decided in